

COMMENTARY

IS EUROPE'S MIDDLE CLASS FINISHED?

The Political Future of the "Third Force"

SHERRY MANGAN

THE failure of the average American "political observer" to predict post-war Europe's sudden electoral shifts

THE development of parliamentary democracy and individual liberty was made possible above all by the vigor, intelligence, and prosperity of the middle class. The decade preceding World War II, and the war itself, marked the political submergence of that class. In the Resistance movement, and in the months following liberation, it seemed to have staged a come-back, and hopes began to be pinned on it as the "third force" between Right and Left. But as Europe's problems of reconstruction continue unsolved, and as the fervor of the Resistance wanes, uneasy questions are sharply posed. Is Europe's middle class strong enough economically to recover from the havoc of World War II? Is it self-confident enough to withstand the ideological pressures from the extreme Left and the extreme Right? Has it developed any independent program of its own? Is it likely to show the courage and leadership needed to hammer through the economic and political measures that would give Europe security with freedom? SHERRY MANGAN, who tries to answer some of these questions, has lived in Europe for much of his life, and served for over nine years as Paris correspondent for *Time* until he was expelled by the Nazis. After an assignment in South America, he returned to France, where he now lives as a free-lance writer. His article "Is DeGaulle Fascist?" in the January COMMENTARY aroused widespread comment both here and abroad. Mr. Mangan was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1904.

has had one chief cause—his inability to estimate around which political tendencies the European middle class, uprooted from its traditional parties and allegiances, would, at any given moment, massively pile up. For behind these shifts, zigzags, and flipflops—as evidenced in the Labor party's victory in Britain and the sudden turns and reverses of power in French, Italian, Czechoslovak, Austrian, and other elections since 1945—the same factor is operating: the wild search of the disoriented middle class for some solution to its impasse.

Our observer can take comfort, however. There is somebody even more puzzled than he about where the European middle class is going. That is the middle-class European himself.

Jacques Bonhomme's puzzlement is, of course, more unconscious than apparent. At any moment he is, as he always has been, vocally sure of his direction. Thus, in 1948, he and other middle-class Europeans still believe that the middle class is of political importance, has a future, and possesses a program—though here unfortunately there is immediate disagreement in at least three or four ways as to what that program is.

No class willingly leaves the stage of history. It is a commonplace that doomed ruling classes go down in brutality and

blood. The European middle class, which never has ruled and never will rule, is going down in vacillation and talk.

The Long Decline

TO SAY that the middle class has never ruled does not mean that it did not have a great tradition and an important political role.

Its ideology of individualism and liberalism not only produced, in the medieval communes, the first modern experience of large-scale self-administration, but became the driving force of the bourgeois revolution that established the democratic capitalist state. And during that state's efflorescence, the middle-class ideals—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—even though their application sometimes left a great deal to be desired, were at least firmly embedded in documents, speeches, and the pediments of public buildings.

Furthermore, up until World War I, though the economic weight of the middle class was diminishing rapidly, its political tradition was successfully outliving economic reality. Middle-class politicians were the leaders of all political parties, whatever class they represented. In France, for example, Jaurès led the Social Democrats, Clemenceau the Radical Center, and Maurras the extreme Right. Political life in Italy and Britain was dominated by such figures as Giolitti and Lloyd George. With the exception of Germany, the nobility no longer played any politically important role in Western Europe; real workingmen were very rare among political leaders; and the large capitalists, though influential as powers behind the throne, mostly looked after their businesses. Politics thus became a sort of monopoly of lawyers, professors, journalists, and other members of the middle-class professions, and there appeared, for the first time in modern European history, the figure of the professional politician. This period was, at least in appearance, the political golden age of the middle class.

World War I ended all that: the history

of the European middle class from 1914 to 1939 was one of disintegration in every area. Its economic position was shaken by inflation, depression, and industrial rationalization. Hundreds of thousands of rentiers were bankrupted. Artisans, professional men, technicians, and small businessmen were driven from prosperity to either abandonment of economic independence or a marginal existence. Intellectually trained youth, emerging from the universities, faced chronic unemployment.

Politically, these economic processes were reflected in increased social polarization—a steady growth in the political importance of the top and bottom of the social ladder at the expense of the middle. Save for vote-catching and quickly-forgotten promises at election times, the middle class felt itself a football in the struggle between capital and labor. Even its one-time monopoly of the role of professional politician disappeared with the appearance, at one extreme, of numerous worker-politicians, such as trade-union leaders and professional revolutionaries, and, at the other, of capitalists personally entering politics, such as Rathenau in Germany, De Wendel in France, Francqui in Belgium, and a whole collection of Italian bankers and British businessmen. There arose in addition two new types of professional politicians: generals, such as Ludendorff, Pilsudski, De Bono, and Franco; adventurers, such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Doriot.

But it was in the field of middle-class ideology that there was the greatest disintegration. The middle class asked only to be left alone, to be comfortable, to flourish quietly, and to carry on discussions. But this was just what the epoch would not permit.

The middle class began to fear that it would be trampled out of existence in the savage struggle between capital and labor. Increasingly disregarded and economically squeezed, it began either to doubt its own principles and go over to those of its adversaries, or else to look desperately around for some possibility of imposing its principles by force.

The Mirage of Fascism

FOR a while, fascism, because of its demagoguery, seemed to be the answer to the prayer of the middle classes. It appeared to offer a strong state power which would knock capital's and labor's heads together, which would protect the middle class from both capitalist monopolism and revolutionary egalitarianism. In point of fact, fascism did allow a certain freedom of play for the most energetic and most cynical elements of the middle class: right-wing newspapermen threw out left-wingers; Jewish doctors and lawyers were replaced by "Aryans"; fascist professors displaced socialist ones; and above all *Parteigenossen* supplanted lawyers, trade unionists, and professional politicians in the state apparatus. But the plums, the broad middle-class masses soon discovered, were far too few to go around; and their real problems not only were unsolved but grew sharper.

Economically, fascism accentuated concentration of capital and domination of monopolies, crushing craftsmen and small shopkeepers, especially in the speed-up and rationalization of preparation for war, and in the course of war itself. The middle classes found themselves being "proletarianized" at a faster rate even than before.

Politically, the middle classes soon found that, under fascism, corruption and nepotism were worse than under "rotten democracy." The sense of forming part of an aggressive group was intoxicating, but it was less fun when totalitarianism clamped down on one's own independence of thought and action, and everywhere the "discuss-advise" formula dear to the middle class was replaced by the "command-obey" one.

In the end those sentiments of frustration which had driven the middle classes to fascism were not only not eliminated but much strengthened. A general cynicism found its outlet in explosions of morbidity: sadism, sexual perversions, and Auschwitz.

It would be folly, however, to say that the middle class had been permanently cured of fascism. Squeezed between the two

historically dominant classes, the middle class seems always ready to listen to a demagogue who promises to turn the clock of history backward: to be "above classes," to "put an end to the class struggle," to bring about "national unity"—in a word, to impose from above a discipline on both capital and labor that would let the middle class breathe.

Yet one *can* say that in 1945 the middle class's break with fascism was complete in most European countries, with the possible exception of Spain.

For a century now the political life of that class in Europe had been a pendulum swing toward and away from socialism. Beginning in 1945, the swing, in disillusioned reaction from fascism, was strongly away from the extreme Right. Many went straight to the nearest approximation to socialism (as they understood it) that they could find, whether Stalinism or Social Democracy; others, for disparate reasons, took the special road of the Catholic Center; but those who most clearly and consciously reflected what remained of independent middle-class thought tried a last experiment by joining together in a party of specifically middle-class ideals—that of the "Resistance."

The Mystique of the Resistance

FOR, indeed, the most characteristic expression of middle-class politics, ideas, and ideals, under the concrete historical conditions near the war's end and immediately after the Liberation, were the "Resistance" parties such as the Partito d'Azione in Italy, the Nederlandsche Volksbeweging in Holland, the Union Démocratique Belge in Belgium, the Mouvement de Libération Nationale (later, Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance) in France. Composed exclusively of middle-class elements and led by middle-class intellectuals, they had in common:

(1) a strong tendency to individualism, whereby they maintained 19th-century features, with outstanding talents leading numerous factions in a genuine struggle for ideas—precisely the features that both fascism and Stalinism completely lack;

(2) a strong collectivist trend in economics, shown in their favoring the nationalization of banking, mining, heavy industry, etc.;

(3) militant anti-fascism and defense of democratic institutions, shown in their attempts to democratize their countries' constitutions by abolition of the upper chamber, etc., and to write in specific laws barring fascism, as well as in their insistence on the importance of education in supporting democracy and fighting totalitarianism.

This desire for a maximum of political freedom combined with a degree of state control in economy provoked a hopeless internal conflict the moment it emerged from underground. During the underground struggle against the Nazis, the elements composing these new parties had been completely lined up with Stalinism, which stood on a program very similar to their own. But with the war's end, the clear revelation of Stalinism's real role in Eastern Europe opened their eyes. In their reaction against Stalinism, they broke with Marxist collectivism as well; and, swinging in typical middle-class fashion to the opposite extreme, contributed some of their most brilliant intellectual representatives, such as Koestler and Malraux, to the dominating reactionary anti-Stalinist parties of the Right.

The brief history of these Resistance parties is a microcosm of the middle-class dilemma. Immediately following the Liberation they played an outstanding political role. In Holland and Italy they provided the first post-Liberation premiers, and in many other countries many important cabinet ministers. At this time they were hailed, by many observers who should have known better, as some sort of permanent "new force" that would make great changes. But the internal contradictions of their programs tended to split them apart, while their lack of efficient political machines left them in the position of generals without an army. And so they disappeared from the scene as a real force less than two years after their emergence.

The brief hour on the stage of the Re-

sistance parties seems conclusive evidence that the politics and ideals they stood for had no longer any possibility of winning large sectors of their own, the middle class, and that the time for independent middle-class political thought and action was definitely past.

It is of contributory significance that the author of a recent series of thoughtful articles in the London *Economist* on the political and economic situation of the British middle class, rejects for a number of sound reasons the possibility of forming a middle-class party in Britain.

Having been hoodwinked or having failed in its attempts to construct its own parties with independent middle-class programs, the European middle class, reflecting the varying objective conditions in each country and its own successive experiences and disillusion, has since the Liberation divided its loyalties unevenly among three main political tendencies: Stalinism, the Catholic Center, and Social Democracy.

Surrender to Stalinism

THE mood of that sector of the middle classes which turned to working-class socialism in its Stalinist version after Liberation was not at all the same as that of its ancestors a century or half a century earlier. The attraction of socialist ideals, which had been the determinant factor in earlier epochs, played a quite secondary role. The European middle classes turned toward Stalinism in 1945 principally because of:

(1) the appeal of the Soviet Union and her role in the defeat of Hitler, as a sort of opposite pole to fascism;

(2) the strength of the Communist parties and their dominant role in the Resistance movements; and, above all,

(3) the thoroughly revised program of Stalinism, with its insistence on middle-class rights and privileges, such as: large wage differentials for skilled personnel and technicians; defense of independent small businesses against trusts and cartels; defense of the peasantry against the increasingly anti-peasant attitudes of the industrial workers.

It is no exaggeration to characterize the European middle class's postwar trend toward Stalinism as ninety per cent realistic and opportunistic, and only ten per cent idealistic or ideological. This was particularly the case for "intellectuals." It is perhaps difficult for American intellectuals, who have lost little time in jumping on the anti-Soviet bandwagon, to understand the delay of their Western European counterparts. The answer lies in the fact that immediately after Liberation all the positions of power in the arts and the professions fell into Stalinist hands; and the boys were as quick to recognize on which side their bread was buttered as their American *semblables et frères*.

Opportunism, however, is a weak instrument with which to found a political party. Metaphorically, one might say that the floating middle class washed over the Stalinist position in the immediate post-Liberation period; and that, after the inevitable ebb the other way, only comparatively few stuck to the rough surfaces of that position. Numerically, that proportion was small, and those who in 1946 had the impression that the Communist party, in France for example, was transforming its whole social composition from working class to middle class, were, if not mistaken, at least premature. Those middle-class elements that did remain, however—constituting about ten per cent of the French Communist party (i.e., some one hundred thousand persons)—were absorbed and organized in a way of which the Popular Republicans (MRP) and the Socialists (SFIO) were quite incapable, and act now as a respectable Communist leaven within the French middle class. But in a larger sense it can be said that just that opportunism which attracted middle-class elements to Stalinism when the tide in that direction was in flood, causes them now to flow back to the perhaps more sympathetic ambiance of the MRP, the SFIO, and the Gaullist RPF.

In Eastern Europe, the appeal of Stalinism was and is more profound and far-reaching. Since in that area the role of the middle class in politics had never been determinant,

the Stalinist conquests there gave the East European middle classes, for the first time in their history, the sort of monopoly of political office and opportunity that their counterparts had long held in Western Europe. Partly for this reason, and partly because the Stalinist regime has achieved real progress in the development of education, public health, science, etc., in those countries, it has found its strongest support there among professional men, technicians, and middling well-to-do peasants.

THERE is an important common psychological factor, however, between the European middle-class trend toward Stalinism since 1945 and its trend toward fascism in the prewar period, viz: the middle class loss of faith in liberal individualist thought. Exhausted by the effort to defend himself and win intellectual clarity amid a political confusion he cannot begin to understand, the middle-class European (and not only the European, for that matter) is attracted by the self-abandon to which he is invited by the authoritarian mass solutions of either the Right or the Left. This attraction is not merely a "product of fascism," as is often claimed. It is the result also of 20th-century social conditions, of which fascism and Stalinism are themselves concomitant phenomena.

The attraction of totalitarianism operates visibly in the economic field: the craftsman or young small-businessman, after desperate and embittering struggles to protect his economic independence against the competition of the big rationalized corporation, finds a sort of masochistic pleasure in finally giving up the fight and abandoning himself, as a foreman or junior executive, to the paternalism of his former "persecutor." The extent to which this process is less pleasurable in Europe than in the United States is the measure of the short-sighted and over-greedy European cartel's backwardness in social relations compared to the rich and more imaginative American corporation with its skilful personnel policy—a policy that involves buying up independent intellectuals.

Just as in the economic field, the middle-class man in the intellectual field, after trying to defend his own brand of broad eclecticism against those narrow material powers which he considers to be without intellectual or moral values, finally feels an almost religious sense of abandon in letting himself be dictated to, and intellectually violated, by one or the other of them.

Thus, vast sectors of the European middle class now show regressive characteristics that are at total variance with their past strivings for independence: a fleeing to the powerful authoritarian solution as to a sort of father who will do all the thinking and deciding and make everything come out all right. Oddly enough, this surrender to a strong material power is usually called, by those who embrace it, "realism," while the continued defense of ideas whose realism is provable by logic, reason, and fact is termed "utopianism."

The foregoing in no way means that Stalinism has established any monopoly over middle-class action in Western or even Eastern Europe. It is, rather, the more floating and disoriented layers of the middle class that have found a reassuring solution in Stalinism.

Those who felt still tied somehow to the middle-class ideals, who had, in a certain sense, a greater class consciousness, shrank from either political extreme and attached themselves temporarily to one or the other of the two movements that have profited from the disintegration of the old (liberal) and new (Resistance) political formations of the middle class: the Catholic Center and Social Democracy.

"Solutions": 1—Christian Democracy

CATHOLIC intervention in 19th-century politics (e.g., ultramontanism in France; clericalism in Belgium, Austria, and Bavaria; the Zentrums-Partei in Hohenzollern and Weimar Germany) was made possible by a political machine closely connected with the upper clergy. The centrist base was the peasantry and politically backward workingmen. In the urban middle class as such, clerical in-

fluence was limited to those who were more religiously inclined. Only some specific issue, such as Irish, Flemish, or Polish nationalism, permitted the Catholic parties to extend their influence through broad layers of the urban middle class.

But in the 20th century, and especially after 1929, a new type of Catholic political organization—"Christian Democracy"—began to appear, basing itself mainly on the new anti-socialist Catholic trade unions and drawing much of its force from dynamic youth or workers' youth organizations. This new form of Catholic political action often comes into friction or even open conflict with the upper clergy; but it can on the other hand count on the devotion and self-sacrificing efforts of "new apostles"—urban and rural priests who concentrate on social work: education, youth organization, social insurance, public health, etc. Its ideology breaks sharply with such conservative trends in Catholic thought as were represented in the 19th century by Bonald and la Tour du Pin, and sets itself up rather as a liberal and humanitarian progressive tendency.

Before World War II the influence of this kind of Catholic action was limited mainly to Holland and Belgium. Today, however, it appears momentarily as the outstanding political force among urban and rural middle classes of Italy, France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Germany, and Austria; and also as the main rallying point of non-Communists in Eastern Europe.

The role of this new force in the Resistance immediately before Liberation contributed to its present importance. Another factor was religious revivalism during the occupation years. The participation of women, immemorably under the influence of priests, in postwar elections, was still a further one.

But the most important factor was the moral one: once the bankruptcy of fascism and ultra-nationalism became evident to the middle class, Catholicism was the only system of morality with a strong organizational apparatus that remained unreservedly opposed to Marxism. As such, it became a ral-

lying point for non- or anti-Marxist forces, Catholic and otherwise.

The Christian-Democrat leaders are not naively over-principled: indeed, the evolution of their political ideas is a revealing lesson in tough-minded opportunism. In the Resistance they cleverly adapted themselves to the then prevailing slogans, such as the establishment of a unified trade-union movement in Italy and the nationalization of industry in France, and everywhere they were considered to be, on the whole, "progressive" forces, with whom the Stalinists were only too glad to make an alliance. But after the Liberation they found themselves, without much surprise, the refuge of all those who found they could not hope to revive immediately the extreme-Right reactionary parties of the past.

And as the main issue of struggle becomes more and more that of pro- or anti-Stalinism, the opportunism of these parties has begun to exceed all bounds. The best example of this opportunism is the French MRP, whose sole political goal is to stay in power and keep the Stalinists out. Hence they show a kaleidoscopic variety of ideological conceptions: starting as "dirigistes" (proponents of a controlled economy), they shift with the prevailing winds to be "antis," then zigzag back to being moderately "pro"; and their propagandists are kept busy thinking up elaborate formulas to cover up successive contradictions in their policy.

Thus so-called Christian Democracy has become a typical expression of the completely opportunistic and "realist" trend of the European middle class, which, having "freed" itself from its former ideals, wants only to be on the winning side now, with all the immediate advantages that would bring. Its lack of principles, giving it almost unlimited adaptability, should make one cautious about predicting Christian Democracy's disappearance in the immediate future, despite the historic trend toward political polarization. It may stay around—seriously weakened now and then but always making surprising come-backs—for quite a while yet.

"Solutions": II—Social Democracy

EUROPEAN Social Democracy today is the complement of Christian Democracy, a middle-class "Left" balancing a middle-class "Right"—and both competing for the "Center." When one notes that both groups find themselves nearly everywhere in alliance, including in government coalitions, their similarity becomes striking. And when one further notes that even for their differences they have had to go back to such supposedly settled questions as secular versus religious education, which is at present so exercising the "Third Force" cabinet in France as to threaten a rupture of the coalition, the "principled differences" between them seem, in 1948, an anachronistic vestige.*

Social Democracy (including the Sarragat group in Italy) is the main heir of the Western European liberal-radical tradition. It is also the heir of that ineffable race of professional politicians among whose most recent exploits must be counted the French wine scandals, etc., etc. The Social Democrats now provide that same French village mayor who used before the war to be a Radical-Socialist. In Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries they have reassembled the traditional humanitarian forces whose vessels are lawyers, journalists, teachers, doctors and so forth. Except for the conservative elements, most government functionaries today are more or less involved with Social Democratic politics.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Social Democracy has no longer very much to do with socialism. On the one hand, it is a channel for liberal trends in the middle class. On the other, it shows that the middle class can no longer find its specific political expression in parties of its own, but must seek it in organizations whose traditions and formal loyalties, if not practice, belong to another class.

Within Social Democracy the polarization of the middle class, far from ending, becomes acute: indeed, it is today the new

* Shortly after this article was received the French Cabinet resigned. A new coalition cabinet has been formed.—Ed.

arena to which the middle class's ideological conflicts have been principally transferred. There are to be found pro-Stalinist forces, such as Nenni in Italy, *La Bataille Socialiste* in France, Fierlinger in Czechoslovakia, and the East European Socialists who seem to want to amalgamate with the CP. Also the "orthodox" Marxists such as the German, French, and Austrian Left, the Left in Sarra-gat's party, and the Basso wing of the Nenni Socialists; the reformists, supported particularly by trade-union leaders: thus the British Labor party, the Scandinavians, the French, Belgian, and German Center, the Austrian right wing, and the Czech Center around Lausman; neo-socialist humanitarian elements, seeking an alliance with the Christian Democratic Left, and reinforced by such remnants of the Socialist Resistance movement as Silone in Italy, the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire in France; also the anti-Stalinist Labor Left in Britain and the German youth; and, finally, arch-opportunists of the right wing such as Ramadier and van Acker, who, especially in France, Belgium, Holland, and Scandinavia, look as if they had lost their way and fallen into the Social Democracy by some accident while looking for a good old cozy but alas no longer existent liberal set-up.

Social Democracy is, in a word, a pretty basketful of crabs; and that its cohesion and permanence are problematical is obvious even to its partisans.

Whither? Probably Nowhere

PRESENT-DAY Europe is characterized above all by a fundamental opposition between the working class, more or less dominated for the moment by Stalinism, and the powerful reactionary forces that are everywhere coming out of their storm cellars, more boldly throwing off the protective coloration of Resistance anti-fascism, and openly regrouping themselves. In between stands the bulk of the middle class, politically an uneasy bloc—and significantly called, with reference to the two real forces, the "Third Force"—composed principally of Christian Democratic and Social Democratic tendencies. The mere pres-

ence of three "forces," and not two, would indicate that we have here a purely transitional phenomenon, a temporary stage in the implacable polarization in European politics.

If this "Third Force" of Catholics and Social Democrats that today governs most of the countries of the West has managed so far to maintain an unstable equilibrium, it is largely because American help has been able so far to prevent a major economic catastrophe. But such recent events as the Stalinist coup in Prague, the recurrent semi-crises in the French cabinet, and the revelation of growing economic difficulties all over Western Europe seem to presage an inevitable next stage: the final political split-up of the European middle class.

It would be extremely convenient if middle-class political behavior were unemotionally dictated by the middle class's true and special interests—then one could safely predict the immediate future evolution of Christian Democracy and Social Democracy, to which in its vast majority the middle class has in the recent past brought its floating support: it would move in the direction of an authentic socialism. Unfortunately, however, the most outstanding characteristic of the middle class is that at this moment it cannot see where to go, where to escape from the storm stirred up by the main struggle between capitalism and socialism. Christian Democracy and Social Democracy are momentary refuges, but cannot pretend to any long-term historical viability. The middle class is already looking for new masters, and a figure like de Gaulle, who so far exists only in France, suits it to perfection.

But in any variant, the middle class will bring to its next "crusade" all the moral habits it picked up during its experience with fascism and Stalinism. In Italy and Germany especially, it will be increasingly nationalistic, but certainly not beyond the point where its nationalism would become incompatible with American support and aid. Fascism as such has had its day and is too discredited. But new and more hypocritical forms of totalitarianism will certainly appear, grow like rank weeds, and offer a constant

temptation to that desperate self-abandon which has in this decade replaced eclectic anti-"joiner"-ism as the principal intellectual trait of the European middle class. And of casuistical apologists, rationalizing in the most elegant prose and with the highest moral principles whatever expedients the middle class thinks will save it the longest from a fundamental social decision—of these there will certainly be no lack. That has always been the *specialité de la maison bourgeoise*.

AMONG the intellectuals, the coming divisions are already foreshadowed. The very few whose long flirtation with Marxism has had something genuine in it will throw their lot in definitely with genuine working-class parties, as their elders did in the 1917-23 period. The rest, the vast majority, will align themselves with one or the other of two main attitudes toward sharpening political developments. On the one hand there will be the "real realists," who, like Koestler, will throw overboard all "anti-anti-ism," and become just plain "anti"—viz: will support any consistent anti-Stalinist force as a lesser evil; on the other, there will be those hopeless utopians who, finding even the "Third Force" itself too "compromised" with one of the hostile camps, will take the road along which the French Rassemblement Démocratique Révo-

lutionnaire (followed by Silone in Italy?) seems to be well advanced, of completely retreating from politics. Into what? With such people one hardly knows. Existentialism, perhaps?

No, this is the end of the European middle class, not only as an independent force in politics, but even as a banner-bearer of humanitarian progressive ideals. The thought is repugnant to everyone who senses that it was essentially the middle class that produced over the last century and a half practically every important European cultural manifestation.

But this epoch is political. Caught hopelessly in the present pragmatic choice between Stalinism and anti-Stalinism, too "realistic" to flesh the thin bones of the genuinely revolutionary-socialist movement, the most honest and radical of the middle-class intellectuals can find no other solution than to quit the political field entirely.

In Eastern Europe this renunciation means concentrating at least on the lagging modernization of scientific and technological production. In the West, it means just plain disgust. The pathetic Sartre, all whose brilliance, not unlike Eliot's before him, is devoted to demonstrating that nothing means much of anything, is perhaps today the doomed and questioning European middle class's most representative symbol.